

Application No. 09/986,374
Art Unit 1711
November 17, 2003
Reply to Office Action of September 17, 2003

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the present application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) A method of preparing a low allergenic natural rubber latex, which comprises adding a protease having an exopeptidase activity to a natural rubber latex and aging the natural rubber latex, thereby to decompose a protein in the latex to such a degree that the protein and a protein decomposition product, which have a number-average molecular weight of 4500 or more, are not detected.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of preparing a low allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 1, wherein the protein and the decomposition product thereof in the latex are removed after decomposing the protein.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of preparing a low allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 2, wherein the protein and the decomposition product thereof are removed by a centrifugation treatment.

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4. (Previously Presented) The method of preparing a low allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 1, wherein the pH of the latex is adjusted to a neutral range before treating with the protease having an exopeptidase activity.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of preparing a low allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 1, wherein the protease having an exopeptidase activity is produced by microorganisms which belong to the genus *Aspergillus* or *Rhizopus*.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of preparing a low allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 5, wherein the microorganisms which belong to the genus *Aspergillus* are microorganisms which belong to *Aspergillus oryzae*.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of preparing a low allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 5, wherein the microorganisms which belong to the genus *Aspergillus* are microorganisms which belong to *Aspergillus mellus*.

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8. (Previously Presented) The method of preparing a low allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 5, wherein the microorganisms which belong to the genus *Rhizopus* are microorganisms which belong to *Rhizopus oryzae*.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of preparing a low allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 1, wherein the decomposition treatment of the protein is carried out in the presence of a surfactant.

10-17. (Cancelled)

18. (Previously Presented) A low allergenic natural rubber obtained by a decomposition treatment of a protein, wherein the protein and a protein decomposition product, which have a number-average molecular weight of 4500 or more, are not detected;

wherein said decomposition treatment is adding a protease having an exopeptidase activity to a natural rubber latex and aging the natural rubber latex.

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19. (Previously Presented) The low allergenic natural rubber according to claim 18, wherein a protein and a protein decomposition product, which have a number-average molecular weight of 1500 or more, are not detected.

20. (Previously Presented) The low allergenic natural rubber according to claim 18, wherein a content index of an allergenic protein capable of producing an IgE-class antibody in a human blood serum is 10 $\mu\text{g/g}$ or less.

21. (Previously Presented) The low allergenic natural rubber according to claim 20, wherein the content index of the allergic protein is 5 $\mu\text{g/g}$ or less.

22-25. (Cancelled)